



HELPING PREVENT AGING DRIVER CRASHES



by
**Dorothy
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Celebrating its third birthday, Erie County's Older Driver Family Assistance Help Network brings together more than 40 local organizations in the fields of aging, health, law enforcement, and driving to make it easier to address impaired, at-risk or unsafe situations related to driving.

The Help Network recently expanded their website www.erie.gov/driving with an introductory PowerPoint presentation, and numerous links to members and resources related to driving safety, especially for older drivers and their caregivers. There is a checklist of unsafe driving behaviors, and a flowchart of steps a family might follow for their loved one. The American Medical Association recognizes risks facing aging drivers, and counsels their physicians across the nation about steps to take in addressing issues. If a family member wishes to address their loved one's driving through conversation with their doctor, a helpful link to the *Physician's Guide to Assessing and Counseling Older Drivers* is at the website.

One of the Help Network members, AAA (American Automobile Association) has introduced a first-of-its kind scientifically valid tool to help seniors screen for their driving health in the privacy of their homes. *Roadwise Review: A Tool to Help Seniors Drive Safely Longer*, is a CD-ROM that uses videos and easy-to-follow instructions to screen drivers in eight functional areas shown to be strongest predictors of crash risk among older drivers. AAA West-

ern and Central New York's travel centers are offering *Roadwise Review* at \$11 for AAA members and \$14 for nonmembers, or call 1-800-836-2582 to purchase a retail copy for \$15. The CD-ROM provides confidential feedback and is compatible with most home computers.

Other Help Network members who perform driver evaluations (including actual in-vehicle assessments) are Erie County Medical Center, Driver Evaluation Program - 898-3225 and Driver Evaluation & Training Services at DeGraff Hospital - toll-free 1-877-823-7483.

The Help Network supplies information about services to help families cope with their concerns, linking you to services, information, and support in addressing sensitive family situations with at-risk drivers. A free publication

"When You Are Concerned - a guide for families concerned about the safety of an older driver" is linked from the Help Network website, or by calling the Erie County Department of Senior Services at (716) 858-

8526. It is full of "how-to" information for families and others facing decisions about what to do about unsafe driving. If someone can find assistance for their situation through the Help Network, it may mean fewer aging driver crashes, safer roads for everyone, and perhaps less criticism for those older persons who still drive safely.

It's not the age of the driver that is of concern, but how that driver functions on the road.

Information and assistance regarding driving safety is readily available from Erie County's Older Driver Family Assistance Help Network by calling (716) 858-

8526, the same number for Erie County Dept. of Senior Services. \$

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Eight functional areas screened in AAA's *Roadwise Review*:

- Leg Strength and General Mobility - necessary to control acceleration and braking.
- Head/Neck Flexibility - essential in checking blind spots, lane changes or merging.
- High Contrast Visual Acuity - needed to identify pavement markings, as well as detect many types of hazards in or near the road.
- Low Visual Acuity - vital for driving in low visibility conditions such as dusk, rain or fog.
- Working Memory - important in following directions, remembering traffic rules and regulations, and using information on highway guide signs.
- Visualization of Missing Information - helps a driver recognize hazards even when seeing only part of the picture.
- Visual Search - safe driving requires the ability to quickly find and recognize traffic signs and landmarks.
- Useful Field of View - ensures drivers can pay attention to what is happening right in front of them while also noticing safety threats at the edge of their field of view.

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